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March 14, 1981

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TO: Participants of SIG/Sinai Peacekeeping

FROM: L. Paul Bremer, III, Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: Paper for NSC Meeting on Sinai Peacekeeping

Attached is the proposed paper for the Thursday, March 19, meeting on Sinai peacekeeping.

Also attached is a new version of the paper reflecting the SIG discussion this morning. Please telephone your clearance or comments to David Korn, Director of Israel & Arab-Israeli Affairs (telephone: 622-3672), by noon on Monday, March 16.

COPIES TO

JCS - Lt. General John Pustay
CIA - Mr. Bob Gates (for Admiral Inman)
NSC - Mr. Allen Lenz (for General Schweitzer)
VP's Office - Mrs. Nancy Dyke
OMB - Mr. William Schneider
DOD - Mr. Jay Rixse (for Mr. Ikle)

Attachments:

As stated.

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~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~NSC MEETING ON SINAI SECURITY: Issues for Decision

We need an early decision on the question of U.S. involvement in the security arrangements that are to be put into effect in Sinai in connection with Israel's final withdrawal. There are two aspects:

-- Is the U.S. prepared to indicate to Egypt and Israel that, subject to Congressional approval, it is prepared to contribute a battalion-sized unit to a multinational force in Sinai?

-- Beyond this, is the U.S. prepared to give Israel an assurance that, subject to our Constitutional processes, we will maintain a U.S. unit in the Force for as long as it is required?

Both of these assurances will be crucial to Israeli decision-making with respect to the agreement we are now trying to negotiate with Egypt and Israel. We need an early NSC decision so that we can hold another round of discussions with the parties, and approach other potential troop contributors, prior to Secretary Haig's trip to the Middle East next month.

SIG Consensus

U.S. Objectives. Our primary objective is to enable a strong security arrangement to be emplaced in Sinai so that the Egypt-Israel peace will be strengthened. Next, we want to use the opportunity for a U.S. military contingent there to lay the basis for a viable regional U.S. military presence that can eventually be used to cope with contingencies elsewhere in the area. In working toward the latter objective we will need to take account of Egyptian sensitivities to the establishment of an overt U.S. "base" in Sinai. We should not push so hard on the dual purpose aspect as to jeopardize our ability to get in on the ground now with a contingent.

Size and Type of U.S. Contingent. There was agreement that the U.S. should provide one of the two battalions that will comprise the main elements of the multinational force. The U.S. contingent should be a standard unit, should be sufficiently armed to provide a real deterrent to attack,

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 2 -

and should be mobile. Various configurations for such a force were discussed. This will be the subject of further discussions and a recommendation to the NSC. We should not delay a decision on U.S. willingness to participate in principle for further elaboration of the type of contingent we would propose.

Approach to Other Potential Contributors. The Egyptians do not want an exclusively American force. It will therefore be important to enlist contingents from other countries if at all possible. Australia and Canada seem the best prospects; in addition we would hope to get at least one third world country to participate. We will make our initial approaches to other governments as soon as we reach a decision about our own willingness to participate, as this will be an important factor in their decision.

Consultations with Congress. US participation in a multinational peacekeeping force will require new statutory authority and funding (on funding we have proposed a three-way split with the parties, with the U.S. share about \$20 million/year.) We will be subjected to some hard questioning about the open-ended nature of our commitment (the multinational force has no specified life-term.) But the consensus of the SIG was that this should basically be saleable to Congress after careful consultations. We would propose to begin these as soon as the NSC makes its decision.

Public Handling. It was agreed that it is of great importance to have a coordinated line among all agencies so as to ensure discreet public handling of the purpose of our presence. Our line should be that we are there to participate in a peacekeeping force which has as its purpose the strengthening of the Egypt-Israel peace, a major policy objective for the U.S. Any questions or assertions about the possible use of our contingent beyond this are speculative and hypothetical and we will not be drawn into comment about them.

SECRET/SENSITIVE

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SINAI SECURITY NEGOTIATIONSDISCUSSION PAPERIssue for Decision

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty calls for the establishment of a United Nations Force upon Israel's final withdrawal from Sinai in April 1982 to ensure that the provisions of the Treaty are carried out. As part of the Treaty package, President Carter gave both sides a letter stating that in the event the Security Council was unable to take action to establish a UN Force, the United States would take the necessary steps to ensure establishment of an alternative Multinational Force.

It is clear that in present circumstances the Security Council will not be able to create this Force, and that the United States' commitment will have to come into play. The issue for decision is whether the United States itself should be prepared to participate with military forces in a Multinational Force. We have now had an initial round of discussions with the two sides and it is apparent that the question of whether or not the United States will participate is crucial to the way the two sides view the size and structure of the Force, and how it would carry out its functions. It is at the heart of Israeli confidence in such a Force. We therefore need an early decision concerning U.S. willingness to participate. In taking this decision, we need also to consider how an American troop presence in Sinai relates to our overall strategic approach to the region.

U.S. Objectives

The primary US objective is to help Egypt and Israel to reach agreement on peacekeeping arrangements in which they can both have confidence, so that final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai will take place on schedule and the Egypt-Israel peace will be strengthened. Secondly we want to use the opportunity of a US presence in the peacekeeping arrangements to lay the basis for a viable US military presence that can eventually be used to cope with contingencies elsewhere in the area in the context of our regional strategy. In

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 2 -

connection with the latter objective, we would like to reach an understanding with Egypt and Israel about use of the two airbases in Sinai -- Etzion and Etam -- that would permit the Israelis to leave the facilities at these airbases intact.

In working toward the latter objectives we will need to take into account Egyptian sensitivities to any appearance of giving the US a "military base" in Sinai. The Israelis would be happy to see a dual purpose US force stationed in Sinai, but they are keenly aware of Egyptian sensitivities and do not want to press for this to the point where it might jeopardize Egyptian willingness to agree to strong peacekeeping arrangements. While it is possible Sadat might be brought to agreeing to a US contingent that was overtly a dual purpose force, we cannot be certain of it, and we must weigh carefully whether we want to press for something that could be embarrassing for Sadat at this time. The alternative would be to get in on the ground now with a contingent that does not arouse Egyptian sensitivities, and work for a gradual strengthening of its capability over time.

How a U.S. Decision Relates to the Negotiations

The Israelis attach the highest importance to US participation in the Force, and we know from our initial round of discussions that the Egyptians now also are prepared to see the U.S. participate militarily, provided we can get other nations to do so too. The question of a US role in the Force is so crucial to Israeli decision-making on the size of the Force, how it is structured, and how it should relate to the parties, that we cannot proceed further without a decision on this question. For example, the Israelis take the position that if the U.S. participates, the Force would not have to have more than 2,000 troops; if it does not, they want the Force to number at least 4,000.

The second point is that the logical next step is to make approaches to other governments to see if they are willing to participate in the Multinational Force. One of the first things these governments will want to know is whether the US is prepared to contribute troops. If we make these approaches without being able to convey a clear position about our own role, we are only likely to get evasive responses.

SECRET/SENSITIVE

SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 3 -

A prompt decision is important. Both sides have asked us to get on with these negotiations as quickly as possible with a view to having an agreement by late spring, or early summer by the latest. We need to keep up momentum in the negotiations. The Israelis are particularly concerned that if the negotiations drag on their schedule for an orderly withdrawal could be affected (they have made it clear that they will not complete their withdrawal unless a Force is in place). We are scheduled to have another round of discussions with the parties later this month preparatory to Secretary Haig's Middle East trip next month.

Size and Structure of the Force

On the assumption that the United States will be able to contribute a contingent to the Multinational Force, the basic components of such a Force would be two battalions, supplemented by an aviation support company, a group of military observers to carry out the verification functions specified in the Treaty, and possibly a small coastal patrol capability to verify that there is no interference with free navigation in the Strait of Tiran. Overall this would be about 2,000 men. If the United States decides to participate, we need to decide which elements of the Force we are prepared to provide. The Israelis consider it important that the infantry battalion at Sharm el-Sheikh (overlooking the Strait of Tiran) be American. In addition, the Israelis would be happy if the Americans provided the aviation support company. On the other hand, the Egyptians are sensitive to too prominent a United States role, particularly any exclusive American use of the airfields since this would begin to look as if they had made a base available to us.

If the U.S. participates in this fashion we would hope to get a third-world country, such as Nepal, to provide the other battalion; either the Australians or the Canadians to provide logistics and communications, as well perhaps as the group of military observers; and possibly a Latin American country, such as Ecuador, to provide the coastal patrol facility if this is needed. The US would also continue to conduct high-level U-2 photographic reconnaissance of the Sinai to supplement the Force's verification capability.

SECRET/SENSITIVE

SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 4 -

Funding

The Pentagon estimates that a two battalion Force of the kind described above would cost about \$60 million a year including start-up costs, on the assumption that the Israelis will leave intact facilities that the Force, with Egyptian agreement, could use. We have proposed to the parties a three-way split for financing; we consider it important that the principle be maintained that the parties themselves contribute a fair share of the costs. This will also be an important selling point to the Congress. If we can make the three-way split stick, our contribution would be on the order of \$20 million, only slightly more than we are presently paying for the Sinai Field Mission.

Consultations With Congress

A decision to participate will of course require the approval of Congress. New statutory authority will be required, but what precise form this should take is probably best determined after consulting the Committee Chairmen and key Administration friends on the Hill. In the meantime we have kept both the Senate and House Middle East subcommittees informed about our talks with the parties.

The Executive branch does not have the legal authority, independent of the Congress, to make a commitment for the continued deployment of U.S. Armed Forces abroad for as long as their presence is desired by two foreign governments. Moreover, Congress is not likely to approve such an open-ended commitment, which would make it exceedingly difficult for Congress ever to deny funding or authority in future, unforeseeable circumstances. In view of these considerations, it seems necessary to consult both with the parties and with Congress on a form of words that provides an acceptable assurance of continuity, but leaves that assurance subject to U.S. constitutional processes.

Implications

If a negative decision is reached about US military participation, we may have great difficulty in persuading others to participate in the Force. And if we fail on this front, we would be thrown back on an expanded civilian-type presence of the Sinai Field Mission as the only way we could discharge the commitment of the Carter letter. It

SECRET/SENSITIVE

SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 5 -

is moot whether the Israelis would consider this an adequate fulfillment of the Carter commitment. Thus, if we cannot provide a force, there is a strong possibility the Israelis would refuse to carry out their final stage of withdrawal, which in turn would create a major crisis in the Egypt-Israel peace.

On the other hand, we must be fully aware of the far-reaching implications of a positive decision, and can expect to be questioned sharply in Congress about them. Perhaps the most significant is the open-ended nature of our commitment. There is no specified duration for the life of the Force, and we would have to expect that, once having agreed to contribute troops, we would not be able to withdraw without creating a severe loss of Israeli confidence in the Force. We hope to have the agreement setting up the Force specify that the creation of a United Nations Force mandated by the Security Council remains the ultimate objective since this is what is called for in the Treaty. But we can have no confidence that the Security Council will be in a position to act in the foreseeable future.

A second implication we must weigh is the precedent this may establish for US involvement in and responsibility for peacekeeping arrangements on other fronts of the Arab-Israel conflict if and when settlements are reached there. If we participate in Sinai, it will be more difficult to insist on some other type of supervisory mechanism such as a UN operation elsewhere; the Israelis in particular will want US involvement. On the other hand, the case can be made that it would probably be impossible to achieve a comprehensive settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict in any case unless the U.S. is willing to play this kind of role.

Next Steps

Assuming a positive NSC decision about US involvement, we would propose to proceed as follows:

1. Open consultations immediately in Congress on statutory authority for US participation, funding, and the nature of a US commitment to maintain its presence.
2. Carry out soundings of selected Security Council members as agreed with the parties to establish that a UN force is not available at this time.

SECRET/SENSITIVE

SECRET/SENSITIVE

- 6 -

3. Launch approaches to other potential troop contributors.

4. Dispatch a military team to survey the facilities that we would like the Israelis to leave intact for the Force.

5. Plan for a second round of discussions with the parties just prior to Secretary Haig's Middle East trip. Our second round would concentrate on two tasks:

- a. going over our draft of an agreement between the parties for establishment of the force.
- b. assessing the results of our approaches to other possible troop contributors.

SECRET/SENSITIVE